

REMARKS

The Applicant respectfully requests further examination and reconsideration in view of the arguments set forth fully below. Claims 1-38 were previously pending in this application. Within the Office Action, claims 1-38 have been rejected.

Double Patenting

Within the Office Action, claims 1-38 have been provisionally rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 101 as claiming the same invention as that of claims 1-32 of co-pending Application No. 09/800,566. Each of the independent claims 1, 9, 17, 25, 31, and 32 of the co-pending Application No. 09/800,566 have been amended in the "Amendment and Response to Office Action dated May 13, 2003", which was mailed by the Applicant on August 12, 2003. The amendments to each of the independent claims 1, 9, 17, 25, 31, and 32 of the co-pending Application No. 09/800,566 clarify that accessing one or more nodes within the directory tree structure and obtaining data from the one or more nodes is performed by an external system, where the external system is different than the electronic system that includes the directory tree structure.

Further, each of the independent claims 1, 9, 17, 25, 31, and 32 of Application No. 09/800,566 specify that the external system accesses the one or more nodes and obtains data from the one or more nodes using an applications programming interface (API). The API is described in the specification of Application No. 09/800,566 as allowing other applications to use the research system as a central infrastructure knowledge base. The API creates an interface between the application and the research system that allows a seamless connection to be made without users of the application noticing. The external systems use the API to periodically or randomly query the research system for information (Application No. 09/800,566, page 33, line 9-21).

Independent claims 1, 11, 21, and 31 of the present application are directed to an apparatus for and a method of formatting a directory tree structure and to accessing nodes within the directory tree structure using a query string, wherein the query string defines a navigation path through the directory tree structure to access a specific node within the directory tree structure. Amended independent claims 1, 9, 17, 25, 31, and 32 of the Application No. 09/800,566 are directed to an apparatus for and a method of formatting a directory tree structure within an electronic system, and to an external system different than the electronic system

accessing one or more nodes within the directory tree structure and obtaining data from the one or more nodes by utilizing an applications programming interface (API). Therefore, the claims within the present application and the claims within the Application No. 09/800,566 are not directed to the same invention.

Within the Office Action, claims 1-38 have been provisionally rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1-42 of co-pending Application No. 09/799,032. The Applicant is filing a terminal disclaimer herewith to obviate this double patenting rejection over Application No. 09/799,032.

Specification

Within the Office Action, the Applicant is requested to submit the status of all related applications referenced within the specification. The status of the referenced applications is pending. By the above amendments, the status, filing data and serial number of each referenced co-pending application is included within the specification.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102(e)

Claims 1-3, 11-13, 21-23, and 31-33 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,098,066 issued to Snow et al. (hereafter "Snow"). The Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection for the following reasons.

Snow teaches formatting a searchable database into a tree structure of directories. Each directory includes a document vector for each document within the directory. Each document vector is created by splitting the document into terms and associating a weight to each term based on the frequency with which the term is found in the document. In other words, each document is tagged with a list of terms, and their weights, found within the document. The tags are subsequently searched during keyword searches. Since most words in the document are tagged as "terms", the document vector does not effectively reduce the number of searchable keywords within the document. Snow then performs an adapted version of a keyword search. More specifically, Snow teaches categorizing documents, and then performing a keyword search by first specifying the category in which the keyword search is to be performed and then performing the keyword search within that category.

Further, Snow does not teach how a user subsequently searches the documents for specific values of predetermined parameters, for example using a parametric search. Snow teaches searching documents based on a keyword search of the indexed (tagged) terms. A keyword search is not the same as a parametric search. Snow is not designed to determine and tag documents according to their attribute-value pairs (parameter field names and their values), and to then search for documents according to specified values of predetermined parameters.

The present invention includes categorizing and parameterizing individual data items within a directory tree structure. Discrete data items are located by defining a navigation path through the directory tree structure to a node associated with the discrete data item. Further, one or more parameters are associated with each discrete data item corresponding to a particular node. These one or more parameters are not keywords, or terms, as in Snow, but instead, each parameter defines a generic field (parameter field) to which a specific value corresponding to the discrete data item is associated. For example, at a "real estate" node, a parameter field name can be "number of rooms" or "price". The parameter field name is different than the actual value eventually associated with the parameter field name in relation to a specific data item. Continuing the example, homes for sale may be described in property fliers. A generic property flier can include many parameters used to describe the home for sale, where each parameter is identified by its parameter field name. The generic property flier can include parameters with parameter field names such as "number of bedrooms", "number of bathrooms", "square footage", "address", and "price". A particular data item associated with the real estate node can be a property flier for a specific home for sale. The parameter with parameter field name "number of bedrooms" has a value of "3", in this case, and so on for each of the parameters associated with the property flier. In this manner, it is clear that the value of each parameter, which is specific to a particular data item, is different than the parameter field name of each parameter, which generically defines the type of the parameter.

Snow teaches searching documents based on a keyword search. Snow does not teach determining and tagging documents according to their attribute-value pairs (parameter field names and their values), and to then search for documents within a directory tree structure according to specified values of the predetermined parameters.

Further, within the Office Action, it is stated that element 102 of Figure 7 in Snow is the same as accessing a node within the directory tree structure using a query string as claimed in the present application. The Applicant respectfully disagrees with this conclusion. In Figure 7 of Snow, element 102 is illustrated as "get a user query". In column 8, lines 4-7 of Snow, a user

query is described as “a number of documents desired and one or more search items” and “the user query may include a user selected category”. The user query is nothing more than the search parameters used in the keyword search process described above. In contrast, a query string as claimed in the present invention is described as a specific query language to navigate through the directory tree structure to access a specific node or a discrete data item within the directory (Specification, page 30, lines 26-27). The structure of the query language of the present invention is preferably similar to that of SQL (structured query language), but it is specific to the combined technologies of accessing the directory tree structure and setting parameters for a search (Specification, page 31, lines 6-8). Further, the independent claims 1, 11, 21, and 31 of the present application claim a query string, where the query string defines a navigation path through the directory tree structure to access a specific node within the directory tree structure. Clearly, the query string of the present invention defines the results of a search process, that is the specific node defined by its path through the directory tree structure. The user query of Snow defines search parameters to be used in a subsequent keyword search. In other words, at the point that the user query is defined, the search has yet to be performed. Snow does not teach that the results of the search can be saved as a query string and that the query string can be subsequently used to re-access the directory tree structure at the point defined by the query string.

Claim 1 is directed to a method of accessing information within an electronic system. The method of claim 1 comprises the steps of formatting a searchable database within the electronic system into a directory tree structure, wherein the directory tree structure includes nodes comprising related data and branches comprising links between the nodes, wherein each related item of data is categorized by a navigation path through the directory tree structure and by one or more set parameters, wherein the parameters are specific to the node in which the related data is included, and accessing a node within the directory tree structure using a query string, wherein the query string defines a navigation path through the directory tree structure to access a specific node within the directory tree structure. As discussed above, Snow does not teach searching for documents within a directory tree structure according to specified values of predetermined parameters. Further, Snow does not teach using a query string to access a specific node within the directory tree structure. For at least these reasons the independent claim 1 is allowable over the teachings of Snow.

Claims 2 and 3 depend on the independent claim 1. As described above, the independent claim 1 is allowable over the teachings of Snow. Accordingly, claims 2 and 3 are both also allowable as being dependent on an allowable base claim.

Claim 11 is directed to a research system for accessing information within an electronic system. The research system of claim 11 comprises means for formatting a searchable database within the electronic system into a directory tree structure, wherein the directory tree structure includes nodes comprising related data and branches comprising links between the nodes, wherein each related item of data is categorized by a navigation path through the directory tree structure and by one or more set parameters, wherein the parameters are specific to the node in which the related data is included, and means for accessing a node within the directory tree structure using a query string, wherein the query string defines a navigation path through the directory tree structure to access a specific node within the directory tree structure. As discussed above, Snow does not teach searching for documents within a directory tree structure according to specified values of predetermined parameters. Further, Snow does not teach using a query string to access a specific node within the directory tree structure. For at least these reasons the independent claim 11 is allowable over the teachings of Snow.

Claims 12 and 13 depend on the independent claim 11. As described above, the independent claim 11 is allowable over the teachings of Snow. Accordingly, claims 12 and 13 are both also allowable as being dependent on an allowable base claim.

Claim 21 is directed to a research system for accessing information within an electronic system. The research system of claim 21 comprises a research server configured to format a searchable database within the electronic system into a directory tree structure, wherein the directory tree structure includes nodes comprising related data and branches comprising links between the nodes, wherein each related item of data is categorized by a navigation path through the directory tree structure and by one or more set parameters, wherein the parameters are specific to the node in which the related data is included, and to access a node within the directory tree structure using a query string, wherein the query string defines a navigation path through the directory tree structure to access a specific node within the directory tree structure. As discussed above, Snow does not teach searching for documents within a directory tree structure according to specified values of predetermined parameters. Further, Snow does not teach using a query string to access a specific node within the directory tree structure. For at least these reasons the independent claim 21 is allowable over the teachings of Snow.

Claims 22 and 23 depend on the independent claim 21. As described above, the independent claim 21 is allowable over the teachings of Snow. Accordingly, claims 22 and 23 are both also allowable as being dependent on an allowable base claim.

Claim 31 is directed to a network of devices for accessing information within an electronic system. The network of devices of claim 31 comprises one or more computer systems configured to establish a connection with other systems, and a research server coupled to the one or more computer systems to format a searchable database within the electronic system into a directory tree structure, wherein the directory tree structure includes nodes comprising related data and branches comprising links between the nodes, wherein each related item of data is categorized by a navigation path through the directory tree structure and by one or more set parameters, wherein the parameters are specific to the node in which the related data is included, and to access a node within the directory tree structure using a query string, wherein the query string defines a navigation path through the directory tree structure to access a specific node within the directory tree structure. As discussed above, Snow does not teach searching for documents within a directory tree structure according to specified values of predetermined parameters. Further, Snow does not teach using a query string to access a specific node within the directory tree structure. For at least these reasons the independent claim 31 is allowable over the teachings of Snow.

Claims 32 and 33 depend on the independent claim 31. As described above, the independent claim 31 is allowable over the teachings of Snow. Accordingly, claims 32 and 33 are both also allowable as being dependent on an allowable base claim.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 4-10, 14-20, 24-30, and 34-38 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Snow in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,292,796 issued to Drucker et al. (hereafter "Drucker"). The Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Claims 4-10 are dependent on the independent claim 1. Claims 14-20 are dependent on the independent claim 11. Claims 24-30 are dependent on the independent claim 21. Claims 34-38 are dependent on the independent claim 31. As discussed above, the independent claims 1, 11, 21, and 31 are each allowable over the teachings of Snow. Accordingly, claims 4-10, 14-20, 24-30, and 34-38 are all also allowable as being dependent on an allowable base claim.

For the reasons given above, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 1-38 are now in a condition for allowance, and allowance at an early date would be appreciated. Should the Examiner have any questions or comments, he/she is encouraged to call the undersigned attorney at (408) 530-9700.

Respectfully submitted,
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Date: September 26, 2003

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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING (37 CFR § 1.8(a))

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Date: 9-26-03 By: Jonathan O. Owens